

Alone Together by Luddleston

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Summary:

Zack and Cloud have been dating for like three whole days and Aerith is pretty sure every person in a ten-mile vicinity has caught them making out at least once.

She figures they'll probably try to stop tearing each other's clothes off all the time if she can work out a way to get them some... alone time.

And luckily, she knows a guy.

Alone Together

Author's Note:

i need everyone to know the working title for this was 'let zack and cloud fuck.doc'

Also, thank you to the clack discord for the encouragement and thank you to my enabling writing squad for dealing with my tipsy ass shouting about Cloud's hand kink at least twice this week.

"Can't believe you talked me into this."

Zack grinned at him, eyes shining in the semi-darkness as the moon climbed over the edge of the valley, glimmering off the waterfall. "Can't believe you agreed to it."

Cloud shivered as chilly water flowed over his bare skin. It was up to his waist now. "Well, you did have one very important piece of leverage," he said, taking another step forward. The water line reached just below his chest at the deepest part of the pond.

"What's that?" Zack wondered, tracing his fingertips over the surface of the water, gentle enough not to break the surface tension. His hands dipped below the surface when Cloud surged forward, bringing the world's smallest tidal force with him as he stood up on his toes to kiss Zack.

"Isn't it obvious? You took your shirt off. That's pretty good at convincing me to do a lot of stuff."

"Huh." Zack traced a hand over his cheek, jaw, neck, leaving a trail of water droplets behind. "Gotta keep that in mind for the future."

"Maybe I shouldn't have told you that."

Zack's pulse was racing; Cloud could feel it under his right hand where it rested on Zack's chest. They were inches apart in the water, and Cloud

knew that once they finally broke down and held each other close, there'd be no separating them. Both of them were completely bare, their clothes left in a heap on the half-sunken piece of industrial pipe that served as a makeshift dock into the pond.

Cloud wouldn't have gone skinny dipping for the novelty—though, Zack probably would have. It had been Zack's idea initially. After their first date at the Fifth Cafe, they'd come home to a raucous card game in progress over Aerith's kitchen table and both of them remembered that the house full of people meant there'd be no chance to get some, uh, alone time. As it were.

The thought had been in the back of Cloud's mind since their first kiss in the flowerbed had ended with Zack flushed and undone beneath him, devastatingly obvious in how much he *wanted* Cloud, his hands wandering, his legs wrapped around Cloud's waist, his—

Zack kissed him again, and Cloud was dragged back to the present, leaning into his touch. Cloud grasped the back of Zack's neck with one hand to keep him right where he was at, and Zack made a pleased noise, his hands tracing down Cloud's sides to his hips, warm under the cold water. He paused before going further, his nose pressed to Cloud's cheek as he asked, "yeah?"

"Yeah." Cloud shifted closer, and Zack's hesitation vanished entirely. He grabbed Cloud's ass like he'd done it a few dozen times already, pulling Cloud closer and kissing him, messy with passion. Cloud fit one of Zack's legs between his thighs, pushing against him as much as he could without making the both of them float away.

"Fuck," Zack huffed into the space between them, his hand tracing up Cloud's spine to tangle in his hair, dampening the back of his neck. He nipped at Cloud's lower lip before kissing him again, opening his mouth to let Cloud do whatever the hell he wanted with him.

Cloud ground down against Zack's thigh, already way too keyed up from minutes' worth of action—yeah, it had maybe been too long. He traced a hand down Zack's chest and reached below the water, and, huh. Cloud may

have been hard as hell from all this, but Zack was, apparently, still catching up.

"I'm not—" Zack began, cutting himself off with a nervous laugh. "It's not you. It's just fucking freezing in here."

"I didn't notice," Cloud said, and Zack kissed him again, with enough pressure to bend him back a little.

"Of course you didn't, mountain boy. Keep going like that, though," he said, and Cloud was all too happy to oblige, one arm slung around Zack's shoulders while his other hand was... busy.

After a minute, Zack was fully hard and grinding against Cloud, fingers tracing over his arms, his back, his ass—mostly that last one—while his mouth worked against Cloud's neck, leaving what would've been the world's most obvious hickey if Cloud didn't wear his uniform everywhere. Cloud found himself wishing for a solid surface, so he could push Zack up against something and really give it to him, but he'd contend himself with the soft flow of the water around and between them, the sweet freshness of the night air, and the searing heat of Zack's body against his.

"Got over the cold?" Cloud asked, even though the answer was more than obvious.

Zack laughed, warm air blowing over the spot on Cloud's neck he'd just been kissing. "Yeah, sure. Or just distracted by you. Fuck, I've wanted this for *so long*." He rolled his hips against Cloud's again and tossed his head back when he groaned, like it all just felt *too good*. Cloud wished it wasn't so dark. He'd give anything to see Zack's face right now.

"We've been together for three days, it can't've been that long."

"Sunshine, I've wanted you for way longer than that," Zack said, and when he pulled Cloud in to kiss him again it was all-encompassing, his entire world narrowed to the area in space the two of them occupied. It was always like that when Zack kissed him, even more so when Zack kissed

him like this, deep and wanting, expressive in the way that Zack always was, but the sentiment was different.

When Zack kissed him like this, Cloud was reminded that Zack *loved him*.

It was breathtaking and overwhelming, like being flung off the edge of the Plate and crash-landing, and Cloud had the personal experience to compare the sensations. There wasn't quite as much wind resistance, but the roaring in his ears was the same.

If Cloud was an ordinary person, he'd have been able to lose himself in the moment easily, his awareness full of Zack, unable to perceive anything outside of the little bubble he imagined surrounding them. But his senses were so enhanced it was hard not to notice every single thing around them—and that included the creak of the suspension bridge and the little squeak of terror as *somebody* stumbled upon them. Zack noticed too, his head lifting, his hands not leaving Cloud's body until Cloud stepped back, flushing from a rush of embarrassment that made his entire being cringe.

Worst of all, it was *Tifa*.

When Cloud decided to follow Zack into the water, he'd tallied up everyone staying at the Gainsborough residence and determined that they were all asleep in the makeshift beds shoved into every corner of the house. The lights were dark, save for the lamp on the porch that was always lit. Unless one of them suddenly took up sleepwalking, there was no way anybody would catch them this time.

Cloud had forgotten, in the distraction of all of that bare skin in the moonlight, that Tifa had been out helping Marle with some last-minute reconstruction tasks.

Now, she was standing feet from them, staring with one hand pressed over her mouth, and Cloud wanted to shrink into nonexistence. Just sink below the water until she went inside. Sure, she couldn't see anything; it was pitch-dark outside and the pond water was murky on a good day, but it was the *idea* of the thing. The others had caught them a couple of times, but they'd just been kissing, practically innocent. Now, there was no denying that they

were both completely naked, their piles of clothes telling a pretty clear story.

"I'm sorry!" Tifa called, clutching the rope rail of the bridge so hard her knuckles went white. "I didn't mean to—to, uh, interrupt!"

Sure, she knew the two of them were together, but there was a difference between Zack admitting that he'd asked Tifa for relationship advice and her catching the two of them mid-sexual-encounter in a pond. Cloud's face—no, his entire *head* was on fire, all of him tense and ready to run, except he couldn't, because again, nudity.

Zack still had a hand on his lower back, and didn't make any effort to move. "It's cool," he shouted back, "we were just—damn, I can't think of an excuse."

Now that Zack wasn't kissing him, Cloud was all-too-aware of the uncomfortable sensation of the pond mud sucking at his feet and the mosquito buzzing around somewhere in the vicinity of his left ear. Tifa was still staring (not at them, thankfully), suddenly interested in the front door of Aerith's house.

"I'm just going to go inside. Right now. See you guys tomorrow," Tifa said, resolutely not looking back at them as she finished crossing the bridge and walked to the house. She closed the door behind herself with a little too much force.

"Sounds good!" Zack said, waving like he wasn't naked in a pond about to get as nasty as one could possibly get given the circumstances.

Cloud was never going to be able to look her in the eyes again. He'd have to change his name and move to another continent. He'd...

His panic halted as Zack stopped him in his tracks by kissing him, his hand resting on Cloud's cheek. It was gentler than what he'd been doing but it lasted, long and slow, neither of them wanting to break it and come back to the real world.

"Are we gonna keep...?" Zack began, and Cloud shoved at his shoulder affectionately.

"No. That definitely ruined the mood."

"Yeah, okay."

— — —

"We have a problem," Tifa said, taking a seat at the table next to Aerith, steeping her fingers like they were sitting down to a business meeting in Shinra tower rather than afternoon tea in Aerith's kitchen.

Aerith carefully poured herself another cup of tea, sensing she'd need it to handle whatever Tifa was having an issue with. Normally, Tifa was hard to ruffle unless lives were on the line, so Aerith wasn't taking this 'problem' lightly. She snagged a cookie for good measure.

Tifa let out a measured breath. "It's Zack and Cloud."

Aerith stirred in her cream and sugar with the utmost seriousness. "What about them?"

"They tried to have sex in the pond yesterday."

Aerith was glad she'd taken so much time and care in fixing her second cup of tea, because if she'd been taking a sip, she'd have spat it all over the new bouquet she'd just arranged for the center of the table. She burst into undignified cackling, doubling over and almost whacking her head on the edge of the table. "They *what!?*" she near-screamed, tears coming to her eyes. "Why did they do that? There are so many frogs in there!"

"Who knows," Tifa said, pinching the bridge of her nose. "They're stupid. I mean, you've caught them already too, right?"

"I mean, yeah. Once or twice. Maybe three times." She had to start counting the occasions off on her fingers. Two days ago, she'd left her favorite trowel in the box of gardening supplies on the balcony and had gone up to get it only to find Cloud shirtless in Zack's lap, with his tongue in Zack's mouth.

And then there was yesterday morning, when she wandered yawning into the kitchen and stumbled upon Zack backed up against the counter, hauling Cloud closer to him to kiss him with a kind of intensity she didn't quite remember being in Zack's repertoire.

Oh, right, and the time she'd taken Marlene into the spare room to see if they could find Barret, and the two of them had been locked in an embrace with Cloud's face buried in Zack's neck. Aerith was just thankful she hadn't had to cover Marlene's eyes.

"Yeah, three times," she confirmed. "Kind of a lot, considering." They'd been dating what, three days? Four?

"Wedge said they were making out on the bed in the guest room yesterday afternoon," Tifa added. She took a sip of her own tea. "I mean, I'm happy for them, but..."

"But, we're about to leave Midgar," Aerith sighed. The past week and a half had been idyllic, but they'd have to head back out into the wastelands sometime.

"Right. And we're going to be staying in tents and sharing rooms at inns and if they're still, you know..."

"Trying to fuck on every available surface?" Aerith offered. Tifa laughed, sharp and off-guard like she didn't expect Aerith to say something like that. Aerith got it—she was dainty and girly, and people forgot that she'd lived in the slums for almost her whole life, so her mouth was just as dirty as all the rest of theirs.

"Yeah, that," Tifa said. "I'm just saying, it's pretty clear they haven't been able to..."

"You can't say it, can you?" Aerith asked with the most innocence she could muster.

"Don't tease me," Tifa said, "it's weird to talk about this. Cloud's been my friend since I was like five, I don't want to think about him sleeping with his

boyfriend."

She shrugged. "That's fair."

"Isn't it weird for you? Zack and you used to date, right?"

"Yeah, we did, but it's not weird." Besides, she was interested in somebody else now. Somebody who was currently frowning into a teacup trying to puzzle a way out of a problem that wasn't hers in the first place. Tifa was probably the best person Aerith knew.

"I'm just saying, they're going to be unbearable." Tifa stared at Aerith's floral arrangement, absently brushing her fingers through the greenery that framed the blossoms. "If we could find a way to guarantee the two of them a night alone, they might... relieve some of the tension, you know?"

Aerith nodded, then took another sip. "I think I know how to make that happen."

"You do?"

"Yeah, I know a guy!" Aerith giggled, nudging another cookie onto Tifa's plate. "I've always wanted to say that," she added conspiratorially.

"So, how do we get this to happen?" Tifa asked, already all-in on a plan that Aerith had barely alluded to.

"Well. First, we have to get a message to Wall Market," she began, and Tifa scrunched up her nose like she was starting to have problems with Aerith's plan.

Yeah, well, she'd have a lot of fun with the next step.

— — —

"I don't get why we're doing this," Cloud said. "What kind of information does Aerith need from *this guy*?"

"Dunno." Zack stretched, casually letting one of his arms fall over Cloud's shoulders afterward. "Who is he, even?"

"You don't wanna know."

Cloud always felt a little awkward wandering around Wall Market—everyone was either trying to fight him or fuck him, and while he definitely preferred the former, he got way too much of the latter. Still, it was probably better than sending Aerith or Tifa to gather intel from Andrea Rhodea. Aerith might end up murdering someone, if their last trip was any indication. Tifa would probably be fine, but would come back super annoyed if she happened to run into...

"Cloud? Cloud! Hey, bro, what's going on?"

...If she happened to run into *him*.

Cloud pretended to ignore Johnny, who hadn't learned how to take a hint since Cloud had last saved his ass, and continued to approach, waving wildly at them.

By the time he reached them, he was somehow already winded. "Bro, haven't seen you in a bit, how're you doing? Who's your friend?"

"Stop calling me that," Cloud said.

"Hey, man," Zack said, cool but still polite enough that Johnny would take it as an invitation to continue their conversation. "We're kinda headed to a meeting, so..."

For anyone else, that'd be an outright dismissal, but Johnny took 'kinda' and turned it into 'we've got time to talk.' "Is Tifa with you?" he asked, craning around like she'd be cleverly hidden behind a nearby wall.

"No."

"Damn. I wanted to check up on her after all the... yeah, you know, make sure she's doing okay, but I'm trying not to draw too much attention to... *Avalanche*." He stage-whispered that last bit, even though it wasn't

necessary. Nobody was listening in. Most people heard Johnny start talking and tried to listen to anything else.

"Yeah, okay."

Cloud's curt answers and Zack's puzzled silence did nothing to stop Johnny, who was a human avalanche, himself. "Wait, unless... huh, I never thought about this before, bro, but do you and Tifa have a thing going on?"

Cloud wordlessly gestured to Zack's arm around his shoulders, figuring Johnny would get it.

Johnny did not get it. "I mean, I've always been pretty irresistible, but like, I get it. You play the 'cool, hard-to-get badboy' pretty well, man."

Cloud sighed and rubbed at the bridge of his nose, trying to determine what to say to get out of this conversation as soon as physically possible. Maybe he could just run. Johnny was pretty good at following him, though.

Before Cloud could come up with some way to get them rid of Johnny, Zack's arm unwound from around his shoulders and he shook Johnny's hand, instead. "Don't think I actually introduced myself," he said, "I'm Zack Fair—Cloud's boyfriend."

Johnny looked at them as though Zack had introduced himself as a salamander in human disguise. "Wait... bro, what?"

Cloud sighed, so beyond not interested in expaining any of this to Johnny. *Please tell me you know gay people exist*, his brain offered as a starter.

Before Cloud could speak, though, Johnny started shouting, which was standard for dealing with him. "Wait! Bro! Does this mean I still have a chance with Tifa?"

Oh, so *that's* what the confusion was about. "No. You definitely don't," Cloud said, but Johnny clapped him on the shoulder as he finally, *finally* left.

"Good one, bro. I'm totally gonna win her heart one day!" he proclaimed to a general audience of nobody.

Cloud yanked Zack away before Johnny could turn around and remember that they were there and that he could continue to pester them. They hurried off down the road, past a couple of stalls and deeper into the twisting depths of Wall Market, where Cloud proceeded to absolutely not get lost. At least dusk was falling; it'd make the Honey Bee Inn easier to find. All the neon stood out in the dark.

"So. Cloud. *Bro.*" Zack teased, elbowing him in the side.

"If you call me that again, I'll break up with you," Cloud said. "The only reason I haven't punched that guy yet is that he'd whine about it for hours."

"It's nice to know you're making friends."

— — —

Zack had, unfortunately, missed the mission briefing from Barret because he'd been playing a very important game of checkers with Marlene. He'd tried to get the details out of Cloud later on, but Cloud was weirdly stingy with them, only saying that they had to go to Wall Market to get some information from a contact that he and Aerith had there.

He hadn't expected Cloud to stop outside of the Honey Bee Inn.

Of course Zack knew the name. It was hard *not* to hear about the place, especially among the guys in the military. Zack had never been, always way too wrapped up in his training to go out on the town. And he'd always felt a little weird about these sorts of places.

"I'm gonna stop inside and get the information," Cloud said. "It'll take me thirty seconds, just... wait here."

Still no explanation of *why* they were at a strip club. "Are you sure—"

"Yeah. Don't—you don't need to follow me." And that was that; Cloud walked inside with one final look over his shoulder at Zack that read *stay*

put.

Thirty seconds. Right. Okay. He'd be fine for thirty seconds.

Except that a full minute had passed and Cloud hadn't come out of there and Zack's curiosity was eating him from the inside out. Who was this contact? Why was this the meeting place? Was it somebody who worked here? If so, how did Cloud and Aerith meet them?

He bounced on his heels, momentarily considering doing his usual thing and getting a bit of a workout in while he waited, but they were approaching two minutes, and Zack needed to *know*. With his luck, he'd probably catch Cloud just as he was leaving the building, but whatever, Cloud could be mad at him later. Cloud had known what he was doing when he'd started dating the nosiest person on the Planet.

Zack passed through the curtain that served as a door to find Cloud standing by the reception desk, his arms crossed, leaning against the polished wood of the counter and speaking to a man Zack could only describe as *flamboyant*. Feathered collar and everything.

Zack caught a snatch of conversation, "oh, and here's what Aerith was asking for," from the contact, who had a deep, resonant voice and an accent Zack didn't recognize.

Cloud didn't even have to turn around all the way before saying, "Zack, I told you to wait for me." Damn, he'd gotten hard to sneak up on.

"Uh. Sorry? C'mon, you know I'm not good with the whole patience thing."

The man Cloud was speaking to, their contact, looked Zack over in a way that made him feel oddly exposed, tapping his chin with a forefinger as he considered *something* about Zack. "Aerith told me you'd gone and found yourself a boy toy." He stepped forward, a little closer into Zack's personal space, fingers lifting Zack's chin as he examined his face from every angle. "Can't say I fault you for your taste, Cloud. No wonder you weren't interested, I'm not exactly your type, it seems."

"Seriously, Andrea?" Cloud was hiding his face behind his hand, but in the spaces between his fingers, Zack could see that he'd flushed bright red. He blushed so easily, his fair skin coloring at the slightest provocation, and it was *adorable*.

Okay, now this was kind of fun. Zack laughed while Andrea continued to examine him like he was a prize chocobo, walking a circle behind him to get a good look at everything. Absolutely *everything*, Zack was sure. "Yeah, man, Cloud's got good taste," he said, shoulders back, hands on his hips, posing for the attention.

"Can we go?" Cloud asked, his voice wavering with obvious frustration. He sounded like he was saying every word through gritted teeth.

"Oh, there's no need for that," said Andrea, "it's getting late, wouldn't want you out on the road at this time of night. Aerith told me you'd probably need a room for the evening."

"We don't need—" Cloud began, because sure, they were competent fighters and could handle anything that accosted them on the road, but Zack held up a hand, stopping him mid-sentence because this was an *opportunity*.

"Yeah, that sounds great," he said, but Cloud continued to frown.

The pink mostly faded from Cloud's face, he narrowed his eyes at Andrea. "What's the catch?"

"Nothing. Aerith's a dear, I'd gladly do her a favor anytime." Andrea leaned in toward Cloud, his fingers brushing suggestively down Cloud's arm. "Although, if you *wanted* to grace us with another performance, I'd never say no."

"Not happening."

Performance?

"Too bad." Andrea plucked a key card off the reception desk as soon as the clerk set it down, extending it to Cloud. "Enjoy your night."

PERFORMANCE?

As Andrea retreated, Cloud sighed. "He's gonna be convinced I owe him one after this. Dammit."

A crowd of girls in bee costumes wandered past them, one of them giving Zack a wink, even though she wasn't the one he was staring at with his mouth open like a dumbass. "Performance?" he asked, gesturing at the group of escorts. "Isn't this a strip club?"

Cloud smirked, turning to head for the stairs. "Yep."

Zack raced after him, ignoring the creepily-satisfied-looking guy coming down the stairs as they walked up. "So. I ask again. *Performance?*"

"Yeah."

"I'm sorry, did I miss a very important phase of your life during which *you were a stripper?*" Zack asked, following Cloud as he unlocked the second door on the right with the keycard and stepped inside.

"I didn't strip," Cloud said, like he was trying to hold back laughter. "I just danced. And it was for a mission—wouldn't have done it if Tifa wasn't in danger, but we had to get Andrea on our side."

Zack was still gaping at him. "Well, it sounds like you were damn good at it."

"Not really."

Cloud wandered around the room, peering into corners, examining the full-length mirror hung on the wall opposite the bed. The whole place was decked out in black and gold just like the lobby had been, the table lamp by the bed set on a dimmer to look appropriately romantic.

"What... are you doing?" Zack asked, as Cloud inspected the ceiling, of all places. Zack was a bit busy trying to determine whether the collection of bottles on the bedside table were massage oils, lube, or both. He was gonna go with both.

"Looking for cameras."

"Oh. Yeah. Find any?" Zack asked, still standing awkwardly in the doorway. Cloud looked like he knew what he was doing, choosing specific places to check for recording devices.

"No."

Well, then. Zack stepped closer, until he was right in front of Cloud, and they would've been nose-to-nose without the height difference. "Know what that means?"

"You're not going to have to convince me to try skinny dipping again tonight?" Cloud suggested, and Zack laughed, settling his hands on Cloud's hips as he leaned in to kiss him.

Cloud responded immediately with a soft, sweet sigh, his arms going around Zack's shoulders to pull him in closer. He ran his fingers through Zack's hair, kissing him with clear intent, already pressed against him from chest to thigh.

"Fuck, this is fantastic," Zack said. "We're in a room with a *door* that locks."

"And no Wedge or Aerith to come running in," Cloud added, his hand tracing down Zack's back and eventually coming to rest with his thumb tucked into Zack's waistband.

"Hell yes. Lemme go for a second. I need us to be naked like, two minutes ago."

Cloud was already starting to work at the latches on his own armor, and while it may have been a far cry from a standard First-Class uniform, the basic structure was all the same. Which meant Zack could get him out of it easy. His own was more difficult; he'd ditched the SOLDIER uniform as soon as he'd realized it made him really easy to recognize as a fugitive deserter from Shinra, and his new stuff was definitely not standard-issue for anybody.

By the time he'd managed to get out of it, Cloud was shirtless, and... damn.

Wow.

He'd seen Cloud naked no less than twenty-four hours ago, but that'd been in the moonlight. Zack had barely been able to see the outlines of Cloud's body, much less the rest of him. In the lamplight, every detail was visible, and Zack stopped breathing for a second because, you know, wow.

Cloud had always been cute, but now he was so gorgeous it made Zack's head spin. He'd been aware Cloud had filled out a lot, having felt the solid weight of him anytime they kissed, but...

"Hey." Cloud tugged at the hem of Zack's shirt. "Quit staring at me or this'll never happen."

"Relax, Sunshine, we got time." Zack reached behind himself to pull his shirt off over his head, dropping it to the ground. He crouched, lowering himself to his knees in front of Cloud—sure, he could've undone his fly standing, but he liked the way it made Cloud's eyes go wide and his breathing speed up.

"We've got one night," Cloud corrected him.

"Yeah. And you can fuck me all night if you want," Zack said, leaning in to kiss the sharp curve of Cloud's hipbone, trailing down until he was cut off by the waistband of Cloud's boxers.

Cloud stepped back, away from his touch, but it was just about a foot, and then he hit the edge of the bedframe and sat down a little too fast, like he'd almost stumbled. He leaned forward to yank his boots off and Zack leaned into him while he did, nuzzling at the space between his neck and shoulder, all-too-pleased with himself for dragging that kind of a reaction out of Cloud.

"Are you serious?" Cloud asked as Zack stood, figuring he'd better get out of his own shoes and pants if he wanted this to go any further.

"About what? About you? Of course!"

"No, about me... fucking you." Cloud glanced up at him, a shyness Zack didn't normally associate with Cloud overtaking his expression.

"What? Oh. Oh, yeah. Hell yeah, Cloud." Zack finished undressing, save for his underwear, and found Cloud in a similar state, still seated on the edge of the bed. Zack straddled him, leaning in to kiss him, and Cloud grasped his thighs, holding him close. "It's been a long time since I've been fucked," he said, his lips brushing Cloud's when he spoke. "Too long. I mean, I'm fine with whatever you wanna do, but..."

"Yeah. Yeah, I want—that." He said it with determination set on his lips, and Zack couldn't quite figure out why, until Cloud paused for just a little too long, like he was trying to figure out what happened next.

Oh.

"You've... never done this before, have you?"

Cloud frowned at him, but it just made Zack more sure that he was right. And he'd bet all the gil he had to his name that Cloud wouldn't have told him if he hadn't picked up on it.

"It's alright." Zack stroked the curve of Cloud's jawline with his fingertips, and just that touch got a soft rush of air out of him, not quite a gasp. "I'm kind of liking the idea that I get to be your first."

"It's not like I haven't... done stuff," Cloud said, cringeing at his own choice of words.

"Just haven't gone all the way with somebody, yeah?" Zack said, and now Cloud was cringeing at Zack's choice of words. "Sorry. Gonna try and sound less like an awkward, confused teenager from here on out."

"Same here," Cloud said, "I guess I'll sound like an awkward, confused person in his twenties instead."

Zack cackled and pressed a loud kiss to the side of Cloud's head, the cool metal of Cloud's earring against his cheek as he stayed there a moment longer. "Well, you won't be awkward and confused for long if I can help it," he said, hopping off the bed to examine the set of bottles on the nightstand.

He'd been right about the contents—good. He really didn't want to go wandering around Wall Market to find lube right about now. He whistled as he looked through them, the selection far too expansive for anybody to use in a single night. It was about choices, then.

"Hey, you wanna try a flavored one?" Zack asked, waggling a brightly-colored bottle in Cloud's direction.

"No way." Cloud was stretched out on his side on the bed, watching Zack peruse, some of the tension having gone out of him as Zack poked through the contents of the nightstand like he was looking through the spice cabinet in Aerith's kitchen.

Good. Zack wanted this to be as carefree and fun as possible; both of them deserved a night like that, to just unwind and be together.

He set everything they'd need on the bed, then clambered on top of Cloud again, nudging at him until Cloud was on his back. Cloud touched him gently enough to be called a caress, feeling over his chest, shoulders, arms, as though he'd have to memorize every inch of Zack.

"You know, there were handcuffs in there," Zack said, and added, "fuzzy ones," just to get Cloud to laugh.

"I don't think we need those," Cloud said. "Maybe for round two." He tried to say it with the utmost seriousness, but ended up grinning through his words.

"'Maybe for round two,' he says. Ha. Well, I guess I did say you could fuck me all night."

"Well, you know what they say." Cloud drew him in close and kissed his jaw, whispering against his skin. "About SOLDIERS and stamina and all

that."

"I think, *ah*, that's bullshit. Pretty sure Genesis made that up to get Angeal a date once." Zack settled in, letting Cloud take all of his weight. Cloud made the softest noise of pleasure, the kind Zack wouldn't have heard without enhanced senses.

"Maybe you just don't have it," Cloud suggested.

"And you do?" Zack shifted until his hips were aligned with Cloud's and then pushed forward once, and wow, that felt better without pants on.

Cloud's reply was surprisingly even-toned, given the circumstances. "Well, I haven't tested it, have I?"

"Guess we'll have to try it out, huh?" Zack knew he sounded over-enthusiastic and ridiculous, but it got Cloud to laugh, so he'd do it again a thousand times.

"Guess we will."

Zack kissed him once before pushing himself back up so that he sat on his knees astride Cloud's lap, posing with his back arched, hands running through his hair. It was purposeful, attention-grabbing, and yeah, Cloud seemed to catch on. When Zack glanced back down at him, Cloud's eyes were sharp and focused on every inch of his body. The way Cloud looked at him was the best compliment anybody had given him, halfway between analytical and predatory. Desirous.

Cloud was breathing quick and uneven, and the pink flush on his cheeks had spread all the way down his neck and chest. One of his hands grasped at Zack's thigh, just above his knee, his thumb digging in hard enough to leave the barest shadow of a bruise. Zack ground down once, and *shit*, he was hard. Probably had been since Zack had climbed on top of him. Zack continued to move, more subtly, like it could have almost been an accident if it was at all possible to end up accidentally rubbing your ass against somebody's dick. The angle itself didn't do much for Zack but the way Cloud tipped his head back and let out a shaky moan sure did.

"Zack."

"Yeah?"

Cloud sat up halfway, looping his fingers through the chain that held Zack's dog tags, the SOLDIER ones he still never took off, dragging Zack forward and kissing him a little too hard. "I need it," he said, breath ragged against Zack's lips. "Please."

Huh. Looks like Zack had found what it took to get to make Cloud ask nicely these days. He pressed against Cloud's chest, pushing until his head hit the pillows. Cloud gave in easily; he could've fought it if he wanted to, but he let Zack move him.

"I'll take care of you," Zack said, "just hold on, okay?"

Cloud bit his lip so hard Zack worried he was going to make himself bleed. He finally let go to say, "okay."

"Should've taken these off before," Zack said, swinging off of Cloud's lap so that he could yank his boxers off, not missing the way Cloud's gaze drifted to his cock and stuck there.

"How do you want to—oh, *fuck, Zack.*" The end of Cloud's sentence disappeared into a moan as Zack stroked him through the thin fabric of his underwear, which was hiding exactly nothing at this point.

Zack could interpret the rest of the question, though. "Let me ride you?" he asked.

Cloud laughed breathlessly, and Zack didn't know if it was the suggestion or the fact that Zack was undressing him. "Yeah, do that."

Zack grinned, tossing Cloud's underwear over his shoulder (they'd find it later, okay) and clambering atop him again. "I'm good at that," he announced, reaching past Cloud's head to snag the lube, faltering for just a second when Cloud's hand wrapped around his cock. "That's, ah, why I do all the squats."

"Y'know, I might believe that if you were capable of sitting still for a second," Cloud said.

"Damn, you got me," Zack said, "I don't do it to be sexy. The sexiness is a side effect. Now stop touching me while I do this—don't pout, I'll come if you keep going."

Cloud took to stroking his thighs instead (of course, they were fantastic), his teeth digging into his lip again as he watched Zack fuck himself on his fingers. *Fuck*, it really had been a long time. He wanted *Cloud* inside him, right fucking now, but he wasn't used to the feeling anymore, and he'd need a few more minutes than usual to adjust to it.

Still felt good, enough to make him moan, loud and unrestrained. Cloud wasn't quite the same, burying his face in his hand, which just wouldn't do.

"Lemme see you," Zack said, tugging on Cloud's wrist with his free hand. He shifted just enough to let Zack see his eyes, his mouth still covered, which was also a problem. "Wanna hear you, too."

Cloud didn't move, but he made some kind of muffled noise behind his hand.

"C'mon, nobody else is gonna hear but me." He wasn't really sure how thick the walls were, but the musci from downstairs was loud enough to block out any noise they made. "Cloud, please, I *have* to hear what you sound like when I get you in me."

Cloud's hand dropped away from his face and gasped, near-silent, followed by a shaky moan that was nearly swallowed up in the sound of the music. Zack bet he could get him louder. Zack had also reached the point where 'I'll take my time and get ready' had turned into 'now, *right now*, I have never needed anything more than this'.

He considered for approximately half a second before wiping his fingers off on the sheets (the Honey Bee's staff probably dealt with worse) and swept Cloud into a crushing kiss, the kind that made Cloud's fingers curl, blunt nails digging into Zack's shoulders.

"*I want you in me, right now,*" Zack said, and Cloud made a soft, choked noise.

Cloud picked up the condom Zack had tossed somewhere near the pillows, pressing it into his hand. "Do it. Before I flip you over."

"Oh fuck *me,*" Zack muttered, not realizing how accurate it was until he was treated to the sight of Cloud grinning up at him like he was gonna do that and so much more.

"I was planning on it."

Cloud may have been inexperienced and nervous, but that didn't stop him from sounding like the sexiest, most confident person on the Planet. Zack's eyes rolled up—he wasn't an inherently religious person, but he had to thank some kind of higher power for this exact moment in time.

When Zack finally, *fucking finally* got the head of Cloud's cock into him, Cloud bit his lip again, his fingers clawing at the sheets like he wasn't sure what to do with his hands. Zack took his left hand, pressing his mouth to Cloud's palm as he sunk all the way down and Cloud cried out, his eyes tightly shut.

"Ah, fuck, that's good, yeah." Zack trailed kisses from Cloud's palm to his wrist, mouth coming to rest over his pulse point. His heartbeat was racing, although Zack's might've been outpacing him.

He rolled his hips again, slow and steady and *incredible*, and Cloud gripped his hand, locking his fingers between Zack's. Zack started moving, pace as steady as he could keep it, and quickly lost the ability to tell if Cloud was swearing or saying his name. Or both. Probably both.

Zack really *was* good at this, and was helped by the fact that Cloud filled him perfectly, like a lock and key, like matching puzzle pieces, like half a dozen other metaphors that Zack would've considered ridiculous until now.

"You okay?" Zack asked, slowing but not entirely stopping his movements (he couldn't stop, not now). Cloud hadn't gone quiet, not really, his breath

coming in sighs and sharp, half-bitten-off noises, but his eyes were still shut—overwhelmed, maybe? "Cloud? Open your eyes for me?"

When Zack paused just a little too long, Cloud's hips jerked, fucking up into him, and Zack swore he shouted loud enough for them to hear him onstage downstairs. "Don't stop," Cloud said, hands on Zack's hips, guiding him down into his thrusts. His eyes opened for just a second and then his head tipped back, so he stared at the ceiling. "Shit, if I watch you I'm going to fucking lose it."

It took a good long second for Zack to remember how to form words. He sank down heavily, because he was never gonna remember how to speak again if Cloud kept fucking him like that, but the full length of Cloud's cock inside him was pretty damn good at making him speechless, too. "I want that," he said eventually, leaning forward to take Cloud's chin in his hand, tipping his head until Cloud had no choice but to look at him. "Wanna see you lose it. *Cloud*. Let me make you come."

"*Fuck*." So much feeling in a single curse.

Zack started moving again, fucking himself fast and hard, the way Cloud had been thrusting against him a second ago. Cloud moved with him, bucking his hips like he was helpless to do anything else, like fucking Zack was a biological imperative, as necessary as breathing. It made the rhythm clumsy, but oh well, Zack figured, fuck it.

He took Cloud's hand again, squeezing gently, smiling down at him, because how could he do anything else? Cloud was gorgeous beyond imagining in unhindered pleasure, his mouth falling open, mako-bright eyes catching Zack's for just a second before he breathlessly cried out, fingers clutching at Zack's so tightly, Zack didn't know if he'd ever let go.

Cloud looked so good, Zack forgot for just a second that he was balanced on the edge of orgasm himself—until Cloud let go of his hand to yank him down into a kiss, messy and ecstatic, jerking Zack off with his free hand and *oh, right*, Zack was fucking *gone*.

It was the kind of orgasm that made his ears ring afterwards, the pounding bass from downstairs like a full-body throb against his sensitive everything. Ordinarily, he'd be completely immobilized after that, but he just couldn't stop kissing Cloud.

Eventually, once things became more uncomfortable than pleasant, Zack nudged Cloud away from and out of him, pausing for just a second before continuing to luxuriate in the most intense post-coital kiss he could ever remember having. Cloud had a hand on either side of his face, and it wasn't until his messy right hand smudged Zack's own come on his cheek that Zack pulled away from his lips, turning his head just enough to lick Cloud's fingers clean.

"Don't do that," Cloud said, snatching his hand away. "You're not allowed to turn me on again that fast—give me a damn minute." He chastised Zack with a hint of a smile in the corners of his lips. Zack pressed his mouth there.

"You got a thing for this?" he asked, tracing his fingers over Cloud's.

"No." Yes. Stubborn.

"Let me get us cleaned up?" Zack could already feel his skin start to stick to Cloud's unpleasantly.

"Alright," Cloud said, as though he'd rather let Zack lay there until they'd dried to a thoroughly disgusting state.

When Zack moved to stand, Cloud snatched his forearm, keeping him from moving for just a second before letting go, like he'd thought better of it.

"Yes?" Zack asked.

Cloud rubbed at his chin as he thought. "So. Then what?" His eyes were so big and wondering, Zack thought he saw something of the kid he'd met on a snow-capped mountain in Modeoheim in him.

He leaned in, mouth to Cloud's ear. "Then," he said, "you let me suck your dick."

— — —

"Cloud," Zack said, fingers combing through Cloud's hair, "you still awake?"

He'd been drifting into near-sleep, but he nodded anyway. "What time do you think it is?"

"Late. Early. Dunno." Zack's breath tickled at his neck and then Zack kissed him there, his hand tracing down Cloud's neck and chest.

"Again? Really?"

Zack laughed, kissing his shoulder. "Nah, don't think I could go again if I tried."

"Yeah." Cloud traced the shape of the scar on Zack's cheek. "Think I've been less exhausted after fighting a behemoth before."

"I'm gonna take that as a compliment," Zack said, playfully pinching Cloud's hip.

"Of course you are."

"Cloud," Zack said, snuggling up as close as possible to him, holding Cloud tight to his chest. "I love you."

"You too," Cloud said, and the last thing he remembered before drifting off was the kiss Zack pressed to his cheek.

— — —

They ran into Aerith on the road between her place and the Leaf House. Rather, they ran into an enormous basket of flowers that ostensibly had Aerith behind it and was calling out, "good morning!"

"How can you even see us?" Zack lifted the basket from her hands, and yes, there was an Aerith behind it.

"I didn't know it was you," Aerith said, directing Zack to set the flowers over there, no, over *there*, come on.

"We got that data from Andrea," Cloud said, and Aerith turned her attention from the basket, giving him a curious look.

"What data?" It took her a second to catch herself. "*Oh*, that data. Thank you!"

"You don't actually need this, do you," Cloud realized.

Aerith didn't even have it in her to look guilty. "Welllll..."

"Worked out fine for us!" Zack called from where he was leaning over to look through the contents of the basket. Cloud didn't know the names of most of the flowers—Cloud was also deeply distracted by Zack's ass. Everything in him wished they weren't standing out front of the Leaf House and that he could jump Zack without consequence.

"Yeah," Cloud agreed. "But if you did this to get us to keep our hands off each other, I don't think it worked out very well for you."